

Message Text

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41

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 AID-20 FDRE-00 HEW-08

SCA-01 SCSE-00 SWF-02 IO-14 DRC-01 FBO-08 A-01 M-02

PER-05 AGR-20 /161 W

----- 023057

O R 221645Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9696

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY ROME

UNCLAS BAMAKO 2712

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: MALI FLOODS

1. A TORRENTIAL DOWNPOUR LAST NIGHT (AUGUST 21) CAUSED LOCALIZED FLOODING IN AND AROUND BAMAKO WHICH HAS LEFT SEVERAL DEAD AND POSSIBLY SEVERAL HUNDRED PERSONS HOMELESS. MOST SERIOUSLY AFFECTED WERE THE QUARTIER DU FLEUVE WHERE THE EMBASSY, DCM AND OTHER OFFICIAL RESIDENCES ARE LOCATED, AND THE WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS OF BOLIBANA AND BAMAKO COURA, LOCATED BETWEEN BAMAKO'S CENTER AND THE AIR PORT. THE FLOODED AREAS, WHERE THE SWIFTLY FLOWING WATER OFTEN REACHED A DEPTH OF THREE TO FOUR FEET, ARE BISECTED BY SEVERAL OPEN STORM SEWERS WHICH OVERFLOWED. WATER AT THE DCM AND PAO RESIDENCES CRESTED ONLY INCHES BELOW THE MAIN FLOOR AND WHEN THEY SUBSIDED LEFT MUD AND DEBRIS IN GARDENS, STORAGE AREAS AND DRIVEWAYS.

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2. THE DOWNPOUR BEGAN ABOUT 8:30 WEDNESDAY EVENING (AUGUST 21) AND CONTINUED UNTIL 11:00 PM. ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN RAINING REGULARLY FOR THE LAST TWO WEEKS, THIS MARKS THE ONLY SERIOUS FLOODING IN BAMAKO DURING THE CURRENT RAINY SEASON. CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROBLEM IS THE STEADILY RISING NIGER RIVER ON THE EDGE OF BAMAKO WHICH LAST NIGHT REACHED ITS HIGHEST LEVEL, ONLY SOME FIVE FEET BELOW NEREBY STREETS.

3. SEVERAL AMERICAN EMPLOYEES OUT FOR THE EVENING WERE UNABLE TO RETURN HOME; WHICH ONE SLEPT AT A HOTEL, OTHERS WAITED UNTIL 1:00 AM WHEN THE WATERS SUBSIDED ENOUGH TO REACH HOME. THE EMBASSY NURSE WAS FORCED TO ABANDON HER CAR IN THE QUARTIER DU FLUEVE AND TAKE REFUGE IN A NEREBY PROTESTANT MISSION. BY 1:00 AM, HOWEVER, GOM TRUCKS AND TROOPS HAD BEEN MOBILIZED AND HAD BEGAN EVACUATING FLOOD VICTIMS.

4. BY DAWN THE WATER HAD DRAINED OFF, REVEALING NUMEROUS WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS IN RUBBLE. AT MID-MORNING SOME HOMELESS PERSONS HAD ALREADY BEEN RELOCATED IN NEARBY SCHOOLS. OTHERS CONTINUED TO SEARCH IN THE MUD AND DEBRIS FOR THEIR BELONGINGS BEFORE SEEKING NEW SHELTER.

5. THE FARAKO RIVER, THE MAIN SOURCE OF THE FLOODING AND WHICH FLOWS INTO THE NIGER AT BAMAKO, SWEEPED AWAY A 100-FOOT LONG BRIDGE. THE FORCE OF THE CURRENT ALSO ERODED MUD AND THATCH WALLS IN WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS AND WALLS AND ROOFS COLLAPSED, TRAPPING AND KILLING SEVERAL PERSONS.

6. RADIO MALI REPORTED BRIEFLY ON THE FLOODING DURING ITS REGULAR EARLY MORNING TRANSMISSION. THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT REGARDING THE NUMBER OF LIVES LOST AND THE NUMBER OF HOMELESS, BUT THE EMBASSY HAS LEARNED OF AT LEAST 10 DEATHS AND ESTIMATES THE HOMELESS TO BE SEVERAL HUNDRED. MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND DROUGHT COORDINATOR KISSIMA DOUKARA CALLED THE DCM AT MID-MORNING TO REPORT ON THE FLOODING. ALTHOUGH HE COULD PROVIDE NO DETAILS, HE SEEMED TO IMPLY THAT THE GOM WOULD BE ABLE

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TO HANDLE THE SITUATION AND SAID HE WOULD PROVIDE SPECIFICS WHEN AVAILABLE. DOUKARA, WHO IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER RELIEF IN THE BAMAKO AREA, REPORTED AS WELL ON EXTENSIVE FLOODING IN THE REGION OF KAYES, A RAILROAD AND SHIPPING CENTER ON THE SENEGAL RIVER NEAR THE MALI-SENEGAL BORDER. FOOD SUPPLIES IN KAYES, HE SAID, ARE ADEQUATE TO PROVIDE FOR THE VICTIMS.

7. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT FUTURE FLOODING CAN BE
AVOIDED IF, AS ANTICIPATED, THE RAINS BEGIN TO TAPER OFF
AND ULTIMATELY END BY MID-TO-LATE SEPTEMBER. ADDITIONAL
DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED WHEN AVAILABLE.
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